

FAITH

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I don't know about you right now but this is the time of the year when the hectic bustle and hustle of the preceding months finally begins to fall apart. Perhaps it is the ever present cold and flu or the never ending snow or something else entirely, but the build up to Christmas, the start of a new year and the rush of beginning that year has finally stopped and here we are.

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Typically this season of the year is also a time, for much of the Christian world, when we begin to think about embracing Lenten disciplines. Lent, a word of Latin origin, is the season of the year during which people begin to prepare for Holy Week. During Lent people commit to things like fasting or giving up certain kinds of luxuries in order to prepare their hearts for what is to come.

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And yet, can't this time of year be about more than just giving something up? Can't we find some way of preparing ourselves for either the rest of the year or for Holy Week that involves something more productive? I think so.

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Within the scriptures for this season come lessons inviting us to not only turn from the ways that lead us away from God but in so doing actually turn anew toward God. They invite us, our scriptures do, to follow God's Son in the world. We are to follow him into the depths of beauty and brokenness that exist. We are to follow him into pathways of light and love and of hurt and pain. We are to follow him and take up a life with him. This is a process that both challenges us to leave less productive practices behind and invites us take on new ones that pursue grace and truth.

So how will you do this? How will you grow during this season of Lent? Can you put more of yourself into your family, read a book to your kids or go on a date with your spouse, not because you should but because in doing so you acknowledge there's room to grow there? Can you serve at the local food bank, service club, or other community minded group not because they need you but because you are preparing your heart for something greater to come? Can you learn something new or find a new way to center yourself in the gift of life, a life fully lived? How can you find ways to follow Jesus in this season of your life?

Living this way isn't easy but it is a way of discovering God's gifts anew. It does not promise that everything will be easy but it does promise new ways that God's love will be revealed. And that is a good thing for us all!

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